

# ASPECTS OF CELTIC MYTHOLOGY

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### ASPECTS OF CELTIC MYTHOLOGY

By A. G. VAN HAMEL

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SOME scholars look upon a myth as an article of faith of pagan times. Others take it as an expression of the early religious mind in a symbolical form. However, neither dogmatism nor speculation belongs to the primitive properties of religion. Their influence, great though it may become in the course of evolution, is not in any degree underrated if precedence is given to an altogether different aspect of mythology, which is of a practical and, therefore, a more primitive character. Myths have an essential bearing upon the execution of the earliest religious functions, that is, upon the ritual intended for the obtaining of a gift or favour from a superior power. Where a god is worshipped, the myth is there to remind him of what he has done or allowed on a previous occasion. At a more primitive stage some fictitious story of the past is recited so that fate, or whatever friendly or hostile powers might be involved, may react in accordance with the precedent. Whenever a supernatural force is raised by means of magic from a particular individual, the means resorted to is, again, the invocation of a sublime parallel. In this connexion myths appear in the introductory episodes of charms and incantations. These prefatory stories, where as a rule gods or demons are the agents, serve as an incentive to action, addressed to the powers invoked. Here we grasp the myth in its original significance, as we know it from the Anglo-Saxon charms and from those of the German Merseburg MS.

In Irish the verb usually rendered by 'to invoke' (*ad-muiniur*) has the literal meaning of 'to remind' or 'to call to mind'. In fact, 'to invoke' is an incorrect translation, as may be seen from the plain fact that the power 'invoked'

is never identical with that to which the prayer is directed. The concluding verses of the text called the Elegy of Colum Cille contain a prayer to the Lord, but an 'invocation' of St. Columba; evidently the intention is to remind, on our own behalf, the deity of the merits of the saint. In an Old-Irish prayer to God, St. Patrick and his deeds are 'recalled'. We have an Irish spell of the same period for the cure of the eye, directed to God and Christ, with a reference to Bishop Ibar 'who heals'; it is clear that the bishop is not invoked, but only instanced. Very interesting in this respect is the Old-Irish prayer for long life. Its editor expressed his astonishment at the combination in this early text of a dedication to the Holy Trinity and the so-called invocation of pagan superhuman beings. However, the latter are only referred to as examples of a high age and propounded as such to the God of Christianity. This consideration, in fact, elucidates to a great extent the presumed confusion of paganism and Christianity in early times. In the sense 'to adore' the Irish language uses a Latin loan-word (*adraim*).<sup>1</sup>

In the most comprehensive text of the Irish Fenian Cycle, the Colloquy of the Ancients, we witness a scene which is perhaps more instructive than any other in this respect, since it reveals the paradigmatic power of a myth in full action. Two Munster princes request the assistance of Cálte, one of the last surviving Fenian warriors, against three flocks of demoniacal birds. These demons harass their territory every year, destroying the crops and annihilating the game. The old hero complies, and as soon as the birds appear, pronounces a spell, which makes them return to the sea, and kill one another with their beaks of bone and their breath of fire. However, Cálte has previously learned from St. Patrick, in whose company he is wandering over Ireland, that the day corresponds astronomically to that other day when, in the olden time, three mythical benefactors of his race succeeded in expelling an equal number of demoniacal foes. This allusion links the story of the scattered birds to what precedes in the text. For the mythical example

of the three good and the three wicked divine beings is described there in an earlier passage. It ends in a spell cast upon the infernal demons, very much like that used by Cálte against the birds. Evidently his success is due to the imitation of the exemplary\* myth. There is an occult relation between the two events. The myth is not merely an anthropomorphic fiction, but a precedent, fraught with magical energy.

Our conclusion is confirmed by a study of the accessory elements of the myth under review. Before their expulsion by means of a spell the three wicked ones (they are named the Sons of Uar, 'Sons of Cold') have been harassing Finn's warriors for some time, but without success. Their antagonists, the three divine protectors, know how to ward them off; they are accompanied by a magical hound which guards Finn's rampart. In fact, the relations of these benefactors with their clients are of a very intimate character, although this has not been so from their first appearance. It has been necessary to incorporate them in the body of Finn's warriors, the so-called Fiann, and this could not be done until they had revealed their names and made themselves known as the Sons of the King of Iruath. Before this decisive moment their friendship was unreliable and their protection uncertain. They have even killed two young Ulster princes of the Fiann, whose curiosity had incited them to break the conditions of the divine protectors by spying them out during the night. Here is another instance of the paradigmatic meaning of a myth, although the magical connexion is failing. There is a pedagogic note instead. The two Munster princes at whose request the baleful birds are exterminated by Cálte invite St. Patrick to their feast and pay the Gospel tribute. The example of the king's sons of

\* The adjective 'exemplary', throughout this lecture, as applied to heroes or traditions, means a hero or tradition that had to be regarded by people in the early Celtic society as an example which must be imitated by them, or of whose example the deeds of other men must be regarded as a reflexion. It is nearly the same as 'model' but not quite.

Ulster is there to show what would have happened without this ready submission.<sup>2</sup>

Have we a right to regard the three benevolent Sons of the King of Iruath as gods of the Fiann? The question is not altogether irrelevant seeing the harm often caused by the lack of a well-defined terminology in mythological matters. If a distinction is made between gods and divinities, then the Sons of the King of Iruath are on the side of the gods, since there exists a continuous relation between them and their clients. A divinity is a supernatural being, exercising power in a world not identical with ours; it may influence human society, man will occasionally feel and realize its existence, but this contact was never intended by either of the two parties. The god, on the other hand, acts upon human affairs and intervenes whenever it is deemed necessary; man, from his side, seeks to approach him. As we shall see in the course of the present investigation, gods are rare in our sources of Irish paganism, and this must not be imputed to the imperfect state of our authorities, seeing the wealth of light they shed on other sides of early Celtic religion. This makes the appearance of the Sons of the King of Iruath in Fenian story only the more striking. In their case the relation established between the two parties is even expressed by a covenant and strengthened by magical guarantees. At the same time, these princes from fairy-land lack one of the prominent characteristics of a real god: they do not endure. They protect as long as the magical vow—let us use the Irish word *geiss*—is not broken; then, they chastise and pass away. This is the natural consequence of the omnipotence of magic in the Irish conception of life. Broken magic means fate to the early Irish mind, for the human as well as for the divine world. The real god, as known from the mythology of other peoples, is always there; he cannot but exist and is bound to spend his favour or to exert his wrath until the moment when everything shall cease to be. What we find in Ireland is different. These immortals are but moved by the mechanism of magic,

their personality is but little developed, and their presence is only temporary. Thus the use of the word 'a god' would be misleading and prejudicial to a deeper understanding of the facts. It must needs lead astray those students of comparative mythology who have no first-hand knowledge in the Celtic field. The Irish texts themselves use the word for 'a god' practically only in the oath. Here a lasting sanction is instrumental. Mythological figures of the type represented by the Sons of the King of Iruath may best be labelled 'divine magicians'. With a god they share the interest in human affairs, with a divinity the aloofness as soon as the magical bond is broken. The text of the Colloquy of the Ancients, as we have it, is incomplete. Our fragment does not tell us how the intercourse of the Fiann with the Sons of the King of Iruath ends. Fortunately the gap is filled by a Fenian ballad in the Book of Lismore.<sup>3</sup> When it is discovered that the death of the two Ulster princes is their work, Finn spares their lives on the condition that the wonderful hound shall henceforth be his. They pledge the sun and the moon, the land and the sea, that they will never bring it alive out of Ireland. Then they kill it and take the body with them on their way north. There is a pursuit but, of course, without success. The divine protectors pass again into the night of mystery from whence they came.

Now let us consider the manifestation of the magical energy in the Sons of the King of Iruath. Their virtues amount to these three: they protect in war, they provide abundance, and they heal diseases.<sup>4</sup> The whole of Irish literature is there to show that these are exactly the virtues that were expected to be present in beings gifted with a supernatural force, whether divine or human. Elves are in the possession of healing cauldrons or vessels of abundance, saints procure plenty and health by their word or their contact. The head of a buried hero is a security for the land. Princes touch the sick with their hands so that they may be cured. And when the ruler's valour and bounty form the eternal theme with endless variations of bardic poetry, we

can only look upon this tradition as a reminiscence of the sacral nature of kingship. The Sons of the King of Iruath are in no way distinguished from other beings with a supernatural touch. Their attributes are of a general, not an individual character, and there is nothing personal about them. Here is another reason why they are no true gods.<sup>5</sup> Their hound is an animal of plenty that hunts the deer on its own account, just as Manannán's swine procure meat and his cows milk. Their pipe is a healing object and makes man sleep in spite of pains or wounds, owing to the well-known magical virtue of fairy-music.

Even the three magical gifts embodied in the three Sons of the King of Iruath are not represented by each of them separately, as appears from contradictions in the text. Moreover, these virtues are exercised not through personal strength or knowledge, but by mere magic. Spells and a venomous wind, emitted by the dog, are their means of protection. Abundance is also provided from the dog. It vomits fifty ounces of gold and fifty ounces of silver at the moment when Finn finds himself in the necessity to succour a company of indigent poets. Its masters need only pronounce the name of a beverage, and it comes forth from its mouth.

No less remarkable is the homage desired by these divine magicians from their clients. Adoration, the usual form of reciprocity for divine favour, is altogether absent. So is sacrifice. What is asked is actually the opposite thing: they shall not be provided with food by the Fiann, and the poorest hunting-grounds in the country shall be theirs. The third condition is that nobody shall disturb them during the night and, of the three, this is the only obligation that plays a part in the story: it is violated by the Ulster princes and thus causes their destruction. The two other provisions have no object but to display, and perhaps to maintain, the unequalled magical qualities of the dog. Secrecy, mystery, and privacy are what their activity is based upon, not reverence or worship.

Not only is the nature of the Irish divine magicians, at



least in some respects, in straight opposition to that of gods, but the attitude of their human dependants is also of a very unusual character. They just have to let them alone. A nearer approach, even with perfectly friendly and humble intentions, would prove disastrous. Strange though this relation of man with the higher powers may appear, the reason is obvious as soon as it is realized that these powers can only communicate with us by means of magic. From this the early Irish outlook derives its essence, which makes it so much a puzzle for those conversant with the conceptions of, say, the Greeks or the Scandinavians. Whenever magical bonds have been established between a group of humans and some superior being, things should be left as they are. The patron need not exert himself in the interest of his client, since the magic acts for him. Likewise, the dependant is sure to receive what he has been promised, for the patron cannot alter his obligations. The client has no reason to please his divine benefactor. All he should do is not to infringe the magical injunction.

The magical dog links the Sons of the King of Iruath to another triad of supernatural beings, even more famous in Irish mythology, namely, the Sons of Turill Picrenn. The pathetic story of their wanderings and hardships constitutes one of the most beloved themes of Irish literature. We have it in an early and in a later recension.<sup>6</sup>

Of these, the former has only come down to us fragmentarily, as an episode of the Irish Book of Invasions; the opening chapters are wanting. According to the later version, Ireland is attacked by a demoniacal host from overseas, and Lug, lord of the fairy host, sends three messengers in three different directions to collect help. One of them is Cian, his own father. On the way north he meets the three Sons of Turill Picrenn. Without any special reason they decide to attack him. He transforms himself into a pig and escapes. In the disguise of hounds they find him out and kill him with stones, although not without having allowed him to throw off his animal shape. Inevitably their wer-

gild will be greater now, since they have not killed a pig, but a man. In the meantime, Lug has driven away the invaders and calls his men together at Tara. By a stratagem he discovers his father's murderers. They plead for their lives and Lug shows mercy. But he imposes upon them a number of supernatural tasks. It is here the earlier version sets in. They exert themselves to the utmost and perform the tasks with success. But when all care is over, they succumb. To this tragical end the story owes its popularity.

The first thing to be noticed is that, for this other triad, the name 'Sons of Turill Picrenn' is by no means general. In the Book of Invasions they are called the Sons of Delbaeth mac Ogma, a fairy prince. According to a separate tract in the Book of Leinster their father is another fairy lord, Bress mac Elathan. Evidently there was no fixed tradition as to their origin. Then, one of the tasks imposed upon them by Lug is the seeking of a dog that turns into wine every liquid contained in its skin; it belongs to the King of Iruath. Thus Lug, lord of the fairy host, acquires the dog very much in the same way as Finn, chief of the Fiann. Besides, there are some minor points where the two stories agree. Lug's father, Cian, is stoned by his adversaries and, as a memory of this event, a vast plain of stones remains. Likewise, Finn's warriors pelt stones at the departing divine magicians and leave a stony desert behind. Evidently it was customary to connect the possessors of the dog of plenty, or rather their departure, in some way or other with the barrenness of rocks.

Are we to identify the Sons of the King of Iruath with the Sons of Turill Picrenn? The question is not well formulated. Of each of the two triads we have but one story. The two traditions differ a good deal. Lug receives the dog, and those who brought it die. Finn's possession of the dog is of a temporary nature and the original owners take it from him and vanish for ever. In one story it is asked: how did Lug acquire the animal of plenty, and this is but one single episode in a long list of tasks which are nearly all concerned with some magical object. The other tale is mainly about

the way in which Finn lost the hound. This difference must be explained from the fact that Lug is a fairy lord, and Finn, in spite of his heroic dimensions, but a human being. In both cases there is a dog of plenty, which is owned by three supernatural beings and placed by them at the disposal of a representative of Irish chieftaincy. The two divine triads may as well be declared to be identical as not. Nobody ever believed in them in the strict sense of the word. Their stories are but the expression of an idea. The unity is to be seen in the underlying notion; but it gave rise to more than one development. From this very variance of aspects we infer the existence of what may be called a mythical complex.<sup>7</sup> Its principal personalities are the dog, the lord who receives its protection, and the three keepers.

Who are these three? They must by no means be regarded as servile spirits. In the Fenian tale they figure as honoured guests. When in the other story they must obey Lug's command, the sole cause is their obligation to procure the wer-gild for his murdered father. According to the Book of Invasions and a few other sources, they belong to the race of the Tuatha Dé Danann, a group of spirits or supernatural beings, which are usually regarded as a survival of an original Celtic Pantheon. However, all that speaks for this theory is the resemblance of some of their names to those of Gaulish gods. It receives but little support from the Irish tradition. Tuatha Dé Danann literally means 'the Tribes of the god (or goddess) Danu', which would seem to imply that the members of these tribes are no gods themselves. At the same time, in the Book of Invasions the three sons of Turill Picrenn, who procure the magical hound for Lug, receive the title of 'the three gods of Danu'. It would take us too far at present to inquire into the true nature of this Danu. The problem is not only of the etymological order. Evidently in one case Danu is the name of a divinity, whereas in the other Danu appears as a being that stands itself in the need of gods. At all events, for the Tuatha Dé Danann it is essential to have gods; but apart

from this, tradition is uncertain. The current notion is that they had but one god, whose name is Danu; from this the denotation Tuatha Dé Danann was derived. But according to the concomitant tradition there were three gods, and those were the three Sons of Turill Picrenn, who provided their tribes with the dog of plenty and other magical objects. About Danu we know next to nothing. On the sons of Turill Picrenn, on the other hand, we have already succeeded in collecting some valuable materials. Now we can go a step farther and find our conclusion on the nature of a god in Irish paganism confirmed. The name of the Tuatha Dé Danann shows that these tribes receive the assistance of their gods continually, that they will never be deprived of their protection, bounty, and healing power. Even though their society is superhuman, they cannot do without the support of beings that are magically superior. But this support is lasting. This accounts for the use of the word 'god' in connexion with them. No doubt we were right in rejecting it with regard to the human world, with the only exception of the oath. The Tuatha Dé Danann are beings of the blest. Therefore they have a god or gods. In human society, which is essentially imperfect, there are none.<sup>8</sup>

Now it may be understood why the attitude assumed by the divine providers of plenty is so much different in the two traditions compared. To Finn and his warriors eternal bliss is unattainable. The Sons of the King of Iruath give them a chance to have the dog of plenty for themselves for ever. But it is a gift, bound to certain magical conditions. Later on, these are broken. We might add, it was fated that they should be so. The Fenian tradition, as represented by the Colloquy of the Ancients on one side, and the Fenian ballad on the other, is not consistent. Both authorities speak of a rising against the divine benefactors on account of the death of the two Ulster princes. The prose tale makes Finn ask for their names. These they reveal. What followed we do not know, owing to the fragmentary state of our text. But it may be assumed that subsequently they depart because

of the forbidden question. The ballad is no more explicit on this point. All we hear is that the dog is killed by its masters when Finn has wrested the promise from them that it will never be removed alive from Ireland.

However, the circumstances under which the departure of the divine magicians is effectuated, or the causes that made them act so cruelly with regard to their former friends, are not of primary importance. They are but accessory embellishments. What really imports is the fundamental notion of the myth. On this there can be no doubt. We have learned it from our comparison with the story of the Sons of Turill Picrenn. For the Fenian host there are no gods yielding a protection that endures. There is no personal relation, no lasting friendship with any power directing our destiny. On this earth everything is bound by magic, and the risk that it should be broken, even unwillingly and ignorantly, is always there. Man is never sure of the morrow. The idea is generally human. What is characteristic of Irish paganism is the inference that this world has no gods. Their non-existence is the religious expression of the fact that life teems with misery and evil. Gods are a privilege of the world of the blessed spirits.

It is not incumbent upon us to judge of the moral or the philosophical standard of this fundamental religious conception. In itself, however, the incapability to represent a god as jealous, tricky, or cruel—and this is what it comes to with many other peoples—does not point to a low ethical level. This fact remains, even though the belief in the omnipresence of the blind mechanism of magic is in its consequences closely akin to fatalism.

So far it has been attempted to trace the religious foundation of a Fenian legend. The problem presented by traditions of this type cannot be dismissed with a mere reference to the obvious fact that they largely borrow from the folk-tale. Of course, elements such as animals or objects of plenty, conditioned protection, the forbidden question, and many others, cannot deceive us as to their origin. This state-

ment, however, yields only a starting-point. The body of Fenian story is not a collection of folk-tales. Nor is the attachment of popular elements to Finn and his heroes fortuitous. It shows that Fenian story is representative of a conceptional complex which, owing to an inner affinity, could be partly expressed by certain commonplaces of the folk-tale. At the same time, it abounds with matter that has nothing to do with the folk-tale whatever, and the borrowed popular elements have all been linked to definite personalities, forming together well-characterized groups. Wherever the magical outlook is predominant, it is but natural for mythology to draw its images from the inexhaustible well of primitive popular tradition. But as soon as this happens, they acquire a fresh application, and sometimes even a new meaning. Under the outer evidence there must be some hidden psychological process. In order to reveal this it will be necessary first to examine the groups that attracted the popular elements under consideration.

We found the *motif* of the magical dog used in connexion with both the Tuatha Dé Danann and Finn's warriors. Of these, the latter group presents far greater difficulties to the critic than the former, who are evidently the spirits of the land and thus stand for a special chapter of Celtic religion. This it will be best to pass by in silence, since the problem of the Fiann is so much more tantalizing. The outstanding difference between the two groups is expressed by Cálte, himself one of the Fiann, in these words: 'The Tuatha Dé Danann are imperishable; but I belong to the Sons of Míl, and they are short-lived and perishable' (*Acc. na Sen.*, l. 3908). The Fenian warriors are both mortal and failing. We are perfectly justified in regarding them as human beings.

Still, there is something in Fenian tradition that makes us shrink from accepting this conclusion without any restriction. Professor John MacNeill's ingenious argument, which had the object of disclosing an historical foundation for this section of Irish literature, leaves us no better satisfied than

the theory that the Fenian Cycle should be nothing but a mere body of folk-tales. It fails to elucidate the intermingling of historical and fictitious, mostly magical, elements. And should it be objected that a similar process is observed in the Ulster Cycle, then we might retort that then we had better look for an explanation there, too. Only a very few texts of the Fenian Cycle have come down to us from the Old-Irish period. Among them there is, indeed, one that tells us a good deal about the earliest historical connexions of Finn and his warriors; it is the story called 'The Youthful Exploits of Finn'. This, however, may be due to mere accident. Earlier texts may have been lost, and in historical saga youth stories do not generally belong to the primitive stratum. Besides, when the whole body of Fenian tradition is considered, the historical or pseudo-historical tales vanish as compared to those with a magical or even a mythical aspect, such as the numerous hunting traditions. In itself, a mythical origin with later historical connexions, varying according to the successive periods, is even more likely than the reverse. If the numerous allusions to the invasions and raids of the Vikings are regarded as the additions of a later period, then why should not an earlier time be responsible for the rare references to conflicts among Irish tribes? There is no branch of Irish literature where the tendency towards historicizing did not make itself felt.<sup>9</sup>

A glance at the early traditions of Britain settles the matter. Confining ourselves to the legends of King Arthur and his companions, we notice both in the general tendency and in multitudinous details such a perfect and striking agreement with those of the Irish Finn that it cannot be explained away by stating that obviously the two cycles took their subject-matter from the identical stock of popular notions. What to say, for instance, of Creiddylad, daughter of Lludd Silverhand, in one of the Welsh Mabinogion stories, who was 'the tallest maiden in the three islands and the three adjacent islands of the Strong' and for whom two famous heroes, on the authority of Arthur himself, wage the

eternal battle; and of Bébind, daughter of Trén, of Fenian tradition, whom Finn's men compared to 'the mast of a full great high-topped ship', when she fled to them and made Cáilte defend her against a detested husband?<sup>10</sup> Or of the tombstone of Arthur's son Anir, measuring now 6, then 9, and sometimes even 12 or 15 feet, and that of the dwarf of Tara, in which the tallest man of Ireland as well as the tiniest babe found their due proportion?<sup>11</sup>

Let us inspect some prominent characteristics of the leading hero on both sides. Arthur is a great boar-hunter; as such he figures not only in one of the most primitive tales of the Mabinogion, but already in the ninth-century *Wonders of Britain*. In Fenian story boar-hunting is the perpetual *leitmotiv*. The boar is generally of a supernatural character; in some Irish traditions it comports itself exactly like the Welsh Twrch Trwyth.<sup>12</sup> The hounds are no less endowed with magical faculties. Arthur's dog Cafal leaves its footprint in the rock, Finn's dog Bran is conspicuous by its supernatural colouring.<sup>13</sup>

Arthur is also a fighter of monsters. His combat with Rhita the Giant, whose cloak was made of kings' beards, is recorded in the triads of Britain and in several other old sources; its memory still lingers on in present-day Welsh folk-tradition. The number of monsters slain by Finn is imposing. One of them was that of Loch Derg; it killed two thousand or more in a single day, but Finn gripped it by one of the joints and turned it upside down.<sup>14</sup>

If necessary, both Arthur and Finn intervene in the supernatural world. Between Gwynn, son of Nudd, in whom divine traits are now generally recognized, and his unrelenting adversary Gwythr, son of Greidawl, peace is established by Arthur. The Colloquy of the Ancients, likewise, contains more than one instance of a conflict among the Tuatha Dé Danann being decided by the intervention of Finn. From them Cáilte receives a liquid that preserves all past events fresh in the memory, as a reward for his constant assistance in repelling the plunderers that used to harass the land-



divinities every seventh year.<sup>15</sup> Arthur's principal task is the warding-off of foreign invaders. Although we hear little or nothing about this in early Welsh poetry or the prose-tales, one of the original sections of Nennius's *Historia Britonum* enlarges upon it with evident preference. Finn defends the country against both demoniacal and human intruders. Among the former are the Fomore, or submarine demons, among the latter is Mílid, son of Tréchossach, the king of the great eastern world. The Lochlannachs, Finn's continual enemies, are usually regarded as the historical Norsemen, but their character is at the same time largely demoniacal. Sometimes Arthur's opponent is one of the British princes themselves, as in the case of Huail, son of Caw, whose ambition is a menace to the great ruler's empire.<sup>16</sup>

Arthur is also a great releaser of prisoners. Of this there are two instances in the Hunting of the Twrch Trwyth, apart from an allusion to a number of Arthur's own men, who had been captured by Gwynn ab Nudd and were afterwards restored to liberty by the king himself. Of the two other stories, the best known is that of Mabon, son of Modron, who was imprisoned at Gloucester (*Caerloyw*). This Mabon could not be liberated until his cousin Eidoel, son of Aer, had been released from his prison at Caer Glini. According to a life of St. Gildas, Arthur carried his wife, Queen Guinevere, home from Glastonbury after her abduction by Melvas. In one of the collections of early Welsh poetry, the Book of Taliessin, occurs an Arthurian poem, the so-called Harryings of Hell, which contains at least one record of a released prisoner. Evidently this very popular theme is a special Welsh, or British, development; its deeper meaning still remains obscure. It is less conspicuous in the Fenian tradition of Ireland, where the blessings of Roman rule never penetrated.<sup>17</sup>

There must be a common Celtic stock surviving in the Fenian and Arthurian cycles. They are both based on the same notions, and the resemblance of their constitutive elements is too strong to be accidental. When in the literature

of two cognate peoples we find corresponding heroic figures of a very particular type, then there must be a common nucleus. This fact cannot be obscured by any special historical connexions on either side; these are not essential. At present we are not concerned with the evolution but with the origin and foundation of this typical Celtic form of hero-worship. We seek a formula expressive of what is fundamental in the nature of Celtic heroes like Finn and Arthur. Perhaps they are best indicated as the exemplary protectors of the land.

The better one becomes acquainted with Celtic pagan thinking, the more does one realize that there is always a religious undercurrent, which, through many branches, tends towards the central notion of the preservation and protection of the land, both from inside and outside. In Ireland the official historians created a system, according to which the successive groups of colonists wrung the island from their predecessors and from the Fomore, the demons of the surrounding sea. These unfriendly beings appear as the original owners, they are always on the watch and never loosen their grip completely. No fresh colony ever landed without their resistance. In this system there was no room for Fenian tradition, probably because official Milesian history was not interested in it. Still, Finn also has his fights with transmarine monsters and, as a matter of fact, all his activities are at bottom intended for the protection of the land.<sup>18</sup>

This protection assumes many forms. One that is comparatively difficult to understand, since for this a certain revolution in our modes of thinking is required, consists in what might be called the 'knowledge' of the land. The conservation of traditions as to how all the natural phenomena, such as the wells, plains, lakes, and rocks, came into being, and what happened near them, secures a command of the demoniacal guardian powers. This knowledge enables us to befriend them or, if they should be wicked, to appease or subdue them.<sup>19</sup> Protection of a simpler and a more primitive character is afforded by hunting and fighting.

Living creatures embody a magic often more dangerous and more hostile to civilization than that of wild nature itself. Whosoever hunts the boar successfully, destroys those perils. Fighting is necessitated by human invaders, and of them the insular Celts had their share. Besides, there were always the demoniacal spirits of the wild, prone to thwart all human efforts, and the black forces of the waters all around.

Here we feel the eminent importance of magic. All kinds of protection are bound and dominated by it. However, no magic but entails other magic, as the protector needs protection himself. The result is a magical chain that would have no end but for the natural limits of all human reasoning. There is a graduation in accordance with the groups in which this continued magic manifests itself. This we must understand in order to grasp the deeper meaning of Celtic myths.

Highest rank those beings we have labelled 'divine magicians'; for the gods, invoked in the oath, are of too shadowy a nature. The Sons of Turill Picrenn and the Sons of the King of Iruath protect the spirits of the land and the warriors of Finn. But they cannot achieve this without falling back upon the Hound of Plenty. A similar correlation may be noticed in the Welsh mythical stories, even though but scanty remains have come down to us. Of Math, son of Mathonwy, lord of North Wales, it is said in the Mabinogion that he cannot make the circuit of his domain unless he is accompanied by the two sons of Don, Gwydyon and Gilfathwy. These are his divine magical protectors. For him they hunt the swine of Pryderi. For him Gwydyon even slays Pryderi. However, not by his own force but by the performance of magical practices (*hud a lledrith*). These are not described in the text, but the words suffice to prove that Gwydyon, although a divine being, is dependent upon magic himself.

Next in rank come the spirits of the land, the Irish Tuatha Dé Danann. In the official Irish protohistory they figure as the predecessors of the Gaedhil in the capacity of owners of the land. They have a society of their own, which

leads its own life, uninfluenced by human society and, as a rule, not influencing it. Sometimes, however, relations arise, either of a friendly or a hostile character. The Tuatha Dé Danann dispose of various means to protect the land from evil powers. They defeat the ever-lurking sea-demons (*Fomors*) in the battle of Moytura. They have powerful physicians in their midst. However, they want magical protection themselves, and it is of many kinds. Theirs is the Feast of Goibniu, which prevents sorrow and disease, theirs the magical spear that keeps Finn awake in spite of the fairy music of Aillén, son of Midna, who comes in the night to burn down the hall of Tara.<sup>20</sup> Their counterpart in Welsh tradition are the Children of Llyr, the central group in the so-called Four Branches of the Mabinogi. They are typical protectors of the land. Bran is the oldest of them; after his death his head is buried in the White Hill in London, and as long as it is left there, no plague will befall the Island of Britain. It was Arthur himself who disinterred the head, in order that the protection should be entirely his own work, and thus he paved the way for the Saxon conqueror. Bran's brother, Manawydan, is a famous destroyer of magic; he kills the demoniacal mice that ruin his wheat. At the same time, the Children of Llyr have surrounded themselves by numerous magical objects for their own preservation. Among these are the healing cauldron of Bran, which restores life to the killed warriors as soon as their bodies are thrown into it, and the birds of Rhiannon, whose song brings oblivion of troubles and disease.<sup>21</sup>

The third group is that of the heroes. Finn and his warriors are no divinities, they belong to a human race inhabiting Ireland and converse with princes and kings. Yet they have certain superhuman traits as, for instance, their extraordinary size, age, and valour. Therefore they may be styled heroes, on the condition that this word should not be taken in the sense of demi-gods. They are sublimated men, not dethroned or bastardized gods. Their manifold active protection has already been sufficiently illustrated. But they themselves receive protection, too. We saw them

guarded by three divine magicians. Then, there is Créde the wonderful maiden who feeds the heroes during the battle of Ventry. An altogether different form of protection is that afforded by Finn's tooth of wisdom, which always reveals the truth, and his numerous *geasa* or magical injunctions that constitute an infallible security as long as they are not transgressed. Thus it is forbidden to Finn to see a dead man unless he has been killed in battle. As long as this *geiss* is not violated, Finn will remain victorious.<sup>22</sup> Finn's counterpart in Britain is, of course, King Arthur. The whole of his career is devoted to the protection of the land; no more need be said about this. That he was also magically protected is not quite so clear as we might expect. He believed so much in himself, that is, in his own supernatural qualities, that he scorned the bonds of magical security. According to one of the Welsh triads, this is the reason why he disinterred Bran's head and thus prepared the fall of Celtic Britain. On another occasion he defeats the demoniacal ravens of Owein by crushing the magical chessmen of his partner. The moves on the chess-board are a magical counterpart of the real events. Likewise, Caledfwlch, his sword, and Prydwen, his ship, are objects of supernatural qualities.<sup>23</sup>

As a last group there are the kings themselves. To them the actual work of protection is committed. This duty they perform actively by resisting the enemy. But this is not all. There is also a protection of a more mystical character, as appears, for instance, from their responsibility for a failure in the crops. In order to secure the prosperity of the land the Irish kings must not only be physically worthy of the kingship but must also refrain from transgressing certain negative magical obligations. The High-king of Ireland, for instance, must allow the sun to rise upon him on his bed at Tara. On the other hand, if the king protects his country by a strict observance of rules prescribed by fate, their latent energy guards him in its turn. This is clearly shown in the case of the Lia Fáil, the stone that utters a shriek as soon as the

king, willed by destiny, sits down upon it. Henceforth he is magically safeguarded by its inherent power. Among the historical or pseudo-historical Irish kings of an exemplary character King Cormac, son of Art, is prominent. Similar conceptions are found in Britain. A blemished king is deemed incapable of providing sufficient protection and is debarred from succession on account of his defect. Such was the case of Iorwerth Drwyndwn (Flatnose), son of Owein Gwynedd. When King Vortigern realizes that he can stop the Saxon flood no longer, he ceases fighting and builds the Castle of Ambrosius in Snowdonia as a magical rampart for himself and his people. At the prayer of St. German it is destroyed by the fire of heaven; this fatal issue symbolizes the triumph of the personal God of Christianity over the blind magical powers of paganism. The British kings are also under the protection of some magical objects, the so-called Thirteen Jewels of Britain; amongst them are a cauldron of plenty and a sword that bursts into flame as soon as it is drawn by the wrong person. It is interesting to note that even the protection afforded by living beings is not precluded in the case of kings. This, in fact, must be the primary significance of the office of the foot-holder (*troediog*) at the Welsh, and of the king's bed-man (*fer leptha rí*) at the Irish, court. King Conaire Mór of Tara sleeps with his legs upon the lap of a man and with his head in the lap of another; then he has dreams of value. St. Patrick enjoins that the king's bed-fellow shall always be a musician, obviously because of the blessed influence of music. That the foot-holder's function in Wales was of a similar nature, appears from the story of Math, King of Gwynedd, of whom it is said that, in time of peace, he could only live with his feet in the lap of a maiden. The underlying idea is that she imparts her vital force to the king and strengthens him magically. For the same purpose King Cadwallon uses his young nephew Brian. It is only after a sleep in his lap that the king finds himself mentally capable of rejecting the demands of his Northumbrian opponent.<sup>24</sup>

The forms in which the magical protection, both active and passive, manifests itself are much the same in the different groups. Their development presents an interesting problem which, however, lies outside our present scope. It might be surmised that the notion of magical protection attached primarily to actual kingship and was transferred to heroes and divinities. The mystical security emanates from objects and animals; sometimes from human or anthropomorphic beings. Even with these a personal and friendly relation is rare. The magic character is too strong for that.

The group that demands our present attention is that of the heroes. If they are no dethroned gods, but sublimated men, in what sense, then, must this term be taken? The concord of Arthurian and Fenian saga precludes the primary nature of the historical references. The Fenian complex must be largely unhistorical. In all cases where it accords with Arthurian tradition there is not one single trace of an historical basis. Hence a study of the possible historical elements will never take us to the core of the problem. It is the common insular Celtic complex that must be accounted for. Later accretions, of the historical, the romantic, or the mythical type, only prove the survival of its fundamental idea at a comparatively recent date. In Ireland the existence of Fenian saga in a literary form has been demonstrated for the ninth century.<sup>25</sup>

What, then, are the germs of Fenian tradition in Ireland? Even Celtic imagination is not boundless. It requires a starting-point. At the beginning there must be some sense, some inner reality. It is even likely that, for a long time, the contact with this was never completely lost. If we are ever to succeed in discovering this inner reality, it must be borne in mind that all literature has a social function as well as a psychological basis, and that in societies of a more primitive character religion stands for the life of the soul in all its aspects. What are the social and religious aspirations reflected by this strange body of Irish fiction?

Our answer to this question must be based upon the two main results of our examination of the texts. The social function of Fenian and Arthurian tradition, no less than that of the real myths, lies in the paradigmatic value of the stories, and its religious tendencies centre about the fundamental notion of the protection of the land. From these two starting-points the core can be approached. What protection means in the religious sense of the word we have attempted to establish. It implies the fighting of human and demoniacal enemies, the destruction of hostile magic, a complete command of the land by the knowledge of its secrets. Power as a consequence of knowledge must be taken in a far more literal and practical sense than in our own days. Whoever knows the events that have happened at a particular locality, is master of the place, and can turn its latent magical energy into the direction of his own interests. Knowledge of the land is a kind of insurance against failure. The more traditions we possess and the better we preserve them, the stronger will our position be against natural and supernatural adversaries. Hence the typically Irish notion of a 'powerful story', that is, a story-parallel whose recitation warrants success. It survived even in Christian times. Of the hymn called *Lorica Patricii* it is said that it preserves us from the imminent dangers of soul and body, provided it be piously recited. With regard to another semi-Christian semi-pagan story St. Patrick orders that there shall be neither sleep nor conversation during its recital, and that it shall not be told except to a few good people, so that it may be all the better listened to; in addition he ordains many other virtues for it.<sup>26</sup>

This notion of protective power inherent in a story attaches itself naturally to that of its paradigmatic value. The recitation under similar circumstances of a sequence of events of the past secures an identical issue. This holds good especially of stories where the acting personages are of a superhuman quality. All the tales of Finn's heroes are about some form of protection of the land. Hence the



knowledge and preservation of Fenian tradition is in itself a safeguard for generations to come. It constitutes a special form of magical protection in itself and may be defined as a body of paradigmatic stories intended for the security of the native soil. The young have to learn them. The older generation, in its turn, will preserve and transmit them. A comprehensive body of paradigmatic traditions ensures an effective protection of the land.<sup>27</sup>

As a further illustration of this conclusion we may point to the important position assigned to apprenticeship. This is especially clear in the case of the heroical tales. The stories were not only intended to teach their lessons but to emphasize the necessity of profiting from them. The Colloquy of the Ancients is almost exclusively based upon this principle. St. Patrick and many other men besides—mostly princes and kings—visit Cáilte and ask about the happenings in the days of Finn. He never tires of teaching them, and the names of localities are his usual starting-point. His main object is to impart knowledge of the land. Apart from this general structure of the text, there are among the personalities figuring in it some typical representatives of the class of apprentices. One of them is Bran, son of Derg, a Munster prince (*Acc. na Sen.*, ll. 877 sqq.). He comes to Cáilte with the express wish to learn Fenianism (*fiannai-gecht*) from him. The old warrior asks the young man how hunting is practised by his own people, and Bran gives an explanation of it, ending in the complaint: 'Sometimes we kill a deer, sometimes it escapes us'. Upon hearing this, Cáilte bursts into tears because of so much ignorance, and then organizes an exemplary hunt. Eight hundred deer are killed. From that day Bran knows how to hunt the deer. To this typical didactic story another lesson is attached. One of St. Patrick's clerics asks for a share of the game and the young prince is reluctant to comply. But Cáilte intervenes and reminds him of the moral duty to give a part of his profit to the Church. This is, of course, only an addition dating from Christian times. But it shows that the

Church also availed itself of the means provided by the paradigmatic character of Fenian tradition for the establishment of its own rights.

Another instance of Fenian apprenticeship may be seen in the long story of Cas Corach, the musician of the Tuatha Dé Danann, who joins Cáilte on his wanderings over Ireland and seizes every possible opportunity to increase his knowledge of localities and early events (*Acc. na Sen.*, ll. 3352 sqq.). The lessons learned cover the three departments of protection: the providing of safety, abundance, and health. Cas Corach being the minstrel of a divine race, he is already in the possession of the fairy music that enraptures the soul. What he still must learn is tradition. He gives the impression of being intended as an example for young artists, gifted with promising lyrical talents, but as yet lacking the indispensable amount of solid and massive knowledge.

In one of the ballads it is Finn himself who performs the function of the traditional apprentice. When out hunting with some of his men he sees emerging from the mist a tall warrior who holds a bird-crib of red gold in his hand and catches all the birds that pass him. Evidently he belongs to the type of the divine magicians. He invites Finn to follow him, but no sooner have the men entered his stronghold than an iron door is closed upon them. From that moment they receive no food. But Finn has learned his lesson well. Imitating what he has seen from the divine magician, he makes a hazel crib for each of his companions and thus saves their lives. The ballad shows that the didactic element is not limited to the Colloquy of the Ancients, but constitutes an essential trait of Fenian tradition.<sup>28</sup>

Finn is the exemplary hero of Ireland. Princes and nobles learn their office of protecting the land by studying and remembering his exploits. The historical connexions in which he appears are all of a secondary character. He makes his first appearance at Tara as an unknown boy (*Acc. na Sen.*, l. 1677). His name means 'White' and would suit anybody, like Dub, 'Black', or Derg, 'Red'. We have no

right to identify Finn, because of his name, with the Welsh divinity, Gwynn ab Nudd. The British counterpart of Finn is Arthur. Nor is his name uncommon in the early records of Britain and Ireland. For Arthur, as for Finn, scholars have often advocated an historical origin. There may be historical elements in Arthurian tradition. But the foundations of the historical theory are still weaker in Arthur's than in Finn's case. Our earliest source, Gildas, never names him. Yet he would have been his contemporary. Next comes Nennius's *Historia Britonum*, where Arthur figures as a leader in war (*dux bellorum*), who defeats the Saxons in twelve successive battles. However, in an appendix, the *Mirabilia Britanniae*, he appears as the hero of a famous boar-hunting story and of other legendary traditions. It is true that the *Mirabilia* are probably of later origin than the *Historia* proper, but still they belong to the ninth century. If an historical Arthur ever existed, he must have been raised to the level of a legendary hero a few centuries after his death. Besides, the general likeness which links his saga to that of Finn proves that the complex was ready before it was attached to an historical person. At the very best some other British hero preceded Arthur at its head. But then it matters very little for our present argument whether he was originally called Arthur or by some other name. However, since the question of Arthur's historicity will probably never lose its attraction for scholars, it is well to point out that neither the expression *dux bellorum* in Nennius nor the twelve battles against the Saxons justify the assumption that he ever was a living man. Arthurian story shows that in Britain he performs the same function as Finn in Ireland. He protects the land in every possible manner. It was but natural to represent a hero of this type as the victor over the Saxons. At the present day hardly any scholar would maintain the theory that Finn actually was a great warrior of the ninth or the tenth century because he is represented as constantly repulsing the Norsemen. The two cases are completely parallel. *Dux bellorum*, leader in

war, is no doubt a suitable title for a victorious general. But is it not equally appropriate as the title of the chief of a legendary warlike band like the Round Table or the Irish Fiann? In fact, the expressions used in the *Historia Britonum* and its description of Arthur's relations with the Saxons lose nothing of their force if we regard him, in accordance with all the remaining evidence, as the exemplary protecting hero of Britain and nothing else. There is not one single testimony that can be explained exclusively by the assumption of Arthur's historicity.<sup>29</sup>

Our quest has led us towards a general principle from which the whole of Arthurian legend can be understood in its outlines. Like Finn, Arthur hunts the boar and slays demons, monsters, and witches; he repulses the invaders from overseas, he provides wealth from his cauldron of plenty, he is always prepared to intervene whenever his warriors are in straits. Magically protected himself by the Thirteen Jewels of Britain, he applies his own supernatural power to the preservation of the land. By crushing a set of chessmen he scatters the ravens of Owain and overthrows the Saxons. His story teems with topographical lore, and the list of localities having Arthurian connexions is no less imposing than that of places with Fenian memories. If Arthur's activity for the deliverance of prisoners makes his legend depart in one respect from Finn's, it must be realized that this difference does not touch the core. In its essence the theme of the released prisoner has much in common with those Fenian tales where Finn liberates one of his heroes, or his divine allies, from the grip of some wicked demon. The transmitted Arthurian prisoner stories are far from perspicuous, owing to the extreme succinctness of the texts. Yet so much is clear that there is a considerable element of supernatural scenery in them. The dungeons opened by Arthur do not seem to belong to our visible world; they recall the fortresses of Irish demons or divinities. The prison referred to in the Taliessin poem is called *Caer Sidi*, and this *sidi* is singularly reminiscent of the Irish name of the fairies

(*sidhe*). Mabon, son of Modron, is no doubt kept imprisoned at Gloucester; but the colouring of the narrative is far more suggestive of a mysterious locality than of an historical city. Who can tell us what body of tradition was associated with the famous site on the Severn? Weighing the evidence, we might suggest that the theme of the released prisoner has a fair chance of being part and parcel of the common insular Celtic stock, no less than all the other legendary elements under review. It is after all only its outer trappings that betray typically British conditions. In the later Irish Fenian ballads the same *motif* has been introduced. Besides, it is not absent from other sections of Irish literature.<sup>30</sup>

Nor is the notion of apprenticeship altogether unknown in Arthurian legend. It is present in the disguise of the theme of the 'preceding failure'. The Mabinogion story of Kulhwch and Olwen tells how Kulhwch is sent to Arthur's court and claims the king's assistance in the winning of Olwen as his bride (*Red Book Mab.*, pp. 113 sqq.). The great difficulty is to find her. Arthur's first embassy fails. Then the prominent heroes set out and trace her to her father's stronghold. Likewise, in the story called 'The Lady of the Fountain', Owain's great adventure at the magic well is preceded by a visit of a certain Cynon to the same locality. But Cynon was not destined to overcome the Black Knight, and turned home sorely afflicted (*Red Book Mab.*, pp. 170 sqq.). The text records the name 'story of failure' (*chwedl fethedig*) for this type of tradition, and thus furnishes a precious support for the theory that these negative illustrations form a separate group. There can be no doubt as to its meaning. It has a didactic and a pedagogic purpose: the apprentice should avoid failure by studying the career of those who did not fail in the same circumstances. The bonds of relationship uniting Arthurian and Fenian heroic saga are very close indeed. They have the same social function, which is of a religious character and differs but little from that of the mythical tales in the strict sense.

We are led towards a new interpretation of the Welsh

term 'Mabinogi'. It has the advantage that it combines the two principal doctrines, which until now seemed irreconcilable. Against the theory that Mabinogi should mean 'a youth story' it may be argued that the Mabinogion collection, even in its narrowest limits, contains a good many episodes that are not about the hero's youth at all. On the other hand, to interpret it as 'the traditional material intended for a bardic apprentice' seems incompatible with the fact that Mabinogi is also used as a translation of the Latin *infantia*. It may now be suggested that in the term the two notions are to a certain extent combined. For the early Celtic mentality the didactic element is a constituent part of any story, owing to its paradigmatic character. Those that have to learn from it are not only the beginners among the bards, but the whole of the aristocratic younger generation. At the same time, this exemplary material is largely, though not exclusively, about youthful exploits; hence *Infantia Christi* could be translated by *Mabinogi Iesu Crist*. This apparent double meaning is a consequence of the Celtic didactic principle. An exemplary story is intended to impart the actual power of imitating its hero. Therefore, a *mabinogi* does not necessarily reveal the name of its principal figure in the title, as is the case in the 'Mabinogi of the Collar and the Hammer'. This was a tale about capture by means of magic, and it was meant as a magical help to prisoners. No title could better indicate its purport.<sup>31</sup>

Let us return to our main argument. It is, of course, not precluded that at least some tales should preserve ancient myths in the classical sense of the word, that is, traditions embodying a belief connected with gods, even though much of their original splendour should have faded away. Here lies a problem that at present must be left aside. Nor is it ripe for solution. Perhaps one day archaeology will throw its light on it. At all events, the number of possibly ancient myths, reminiscent of an almost forgotten Celtic Olympus, and surviving in insular Celtic literature, is comparatively small. The essential identity of Fenian and Arthurian legend

shows that the religion of the land, and its expression in the form of paradigmatic hero-tales, continues a deeply rooted Celtic tradition. Of course there may also have existed other means of religious presentation. If the tendency to identify every personality in an Irish or Welsh story of magic and imagination with a god is no longer predominant in Celtic studies, yet the evidence for a common Celtic belief in certain divinities remains. It is not sufficient to point to such general similarities as the healing power and the wonderful craftsmanship of the Irish Tuatha Dé Danann and the Welsh Children of Llyr. This Llyr must be equated with the Irish Ler, and hisson Manawydan with Manannán. But here the comparison ends. The traditions about these so-called gods never agree completely. Llyr or Ler, the Sea, is a shadowy figure; he may even have been chosen independently in Ireland and in Britain as a god to swear by, and then have become the father of a set of divine magicians. From a linguistic point of view the Irish name Manannán is not identical with the Welsh Manawydan. Scholars have sometimes equated the Welsh Lludd Silverhand with the Irish Nuadu Silverhand, accepting a change of *Nudd* into *Lludd* owing to the tendency to make the name alliterate with the epithet (*Llaw Ereint*). But the Welsh name of London, *Caerludd*, seems to forbid this construction. It has already been observed that from such a very plain and natural name as Finn or Gwynn ('White') nothing can be inferred. More significant is the identity of the name of the Irish divinity Nuadu with that of the Welsh Nudd, which in a British inscription from Roman times has even come down to us in the older form *Nodons* (*Nodens*).

Why are these traces of common Celtic divinities so faint? There are two possible solutions. Either theism was but little more developed among the ancient Celts than with the later Britons and Irish, or it declined and religion returned to a more primitive stage amongst a population that had left the old home and settled down in the insular colonies. It is a well-known fact that colonizing groups are

generally of a conservative character. Of the home traditions they stick to those that have the deepest roots in the national conscience, leaving behind what bears a late or a foreign stamp. Religious rites and social observances that either adopted a new appearance at home or faded away to mere formalism, will return to their original significance in entirely new circumstances and cut off from the continual influence of the old surroundings. Further, in the case of Britain and Ireland, there is the possibility of an influence exercised upon the Celtic colonists by the original population.

We turn our eyes to ancient Gaul for some more light. Do we find there the same sequence of oath-strengthening gods, divine magicians, spirits of the land, and exemplary heroes? Are there any traces of mythical and heroic lore intended as a guarantee for an undisputed possession of the land? Although Gaulish civilization, lying open to penetration from many sides, is far from uniform, and although it went through a rapid and vehement process of evolution in the last centuries before our era, yet Gaul was the starting-point of the Celtic tribes of Britain and Ireland. As late as Caesar's time the migration of Belgic population-groups had not yet come to an end.

There is plenty of literary and archaeological evidence that in ancient Gaul divinities were worshipped. There is, for instance, the 'god' *Lugus*. His name re-occurs in both Irish and British literary tradition as *Lug* or *Lleu*. More correspondences of this type can be cited. No doubt there is a possibility that the same name may have been chosen independently in different parts of the Celtic world for some divine being. This follows from the plain character of the names. *Lugus* derives his name from an animal, the lynx.<sup>32</sup> The Gaulish *Senacus*, which is identical with the Irish *Senach* and the Welsh *Hynog*, simply means 'the Aged One'. A similar meaning has *Sirona*, which returns in the Irish *Siorna Saeglach*; the etymon is the Irish adjective *str*, Welsh *hir* 'long'. With the Gaulish *Segomo(n)* the name *Netta Segomonas* of an Irish ogam-inscription (later Irish *Nia Segamain*)



has been compared; the interpretation is 'the Victorious One'. One of the most common elements in Gaulish proper names is *Boduo-*, and that this also denoted a divinity with an animal name appears from the Irish noun *bodb*, 'a scald-crow' or 'a female war genius'. A famous correspondence of Gaulish and insular Celtic mythology is furnished by the Welsh *Mabon ab Modron*. In Gaulish this personality would be called *Maponos*, son of *Matrona*, and both names occur in more than one inscription. *Maponos* simply means 'the Youthful One' and *Matrona* 'the Motherly One'. Of all these equations none is of so stringent a character that it could not be accidental. The similarity of the Gaulish *Ogmios*, denoting, according to Lucian, 'the god of eloquence', and the Irish *Ogmae*, one of the Tuatha Dé Danann, is even misleading. Linguistic rules forbid their identification and *Ogmae* is but a derivation from *Ogam*, the name of the earliest Irish alphabet.

However, if credulity is a vice, hypercriticism is one, too. The correspondences demonstrate by their number what each of them would not prove by itself. The existence of a number of names for divine beings common to the continental and the insular Celts cannot be denied. Unfortunately the information regarding the true nature of these deities, furnished by either archaeological or literary sources, is deplorably poor. If the name symbolizes an outstanding quality, the divinity may have been of the exemplary type. This can be proved for Senacus, whose Irish counterpart Senach is 'invoked' in a prayer for long life, that is, he was exhibited to the life energy itself as an example of old age. For Sirona the Irish evidence is less conclusive, but it points in the same direction. Síorna Saeglach figures in the Annals of the Four Masters (*A. M.* 4169) as a pre-historic king of the race of Erimon who reached the age of one hundred and fifty years and defeated both the demoniacal Fomore and the human invaders from Ulster. Thus he appears as an exemplary protector, of the aged type, of a distinct population-group. If the associations

attaching to these names were not different in Gaul from what they were in Ireland, then Segomo would be an exemplary victor in battle. Inscriptions with the name *Matrona* (Welsh: *Modron*) usually have it in the plural, and in a few instances *Lug* is also found in the old plural form *Lugoves*. This points to groups of divinities, not unlike the Irish Tuatha Dé Danann, and to the deification of the land. With these the singular form must be taken as a common noun rather than a proper name. Probably this remark applies also to other deities with names borrowed from animals. *Bodb* is not uncommon in the plural; in Gaul the name has only been preserved as a first element of compounds.

So far as the scanty evidence leaves room for conclusions, the mythological names represented both in Gaul and the islands denote either exemplary figures or group divinities. Apart from these, the Gaulish inscriptions reveal the names of a number of divine beings suggestive of a more individual character. Still it is very doubtful how much of all this is ancient. Gaulish society was, of course, far more complicated than that of other Celtic populations. It was continually in touch with Mediterranean civilization and under this influence it would naturally develop the notion of a god in the classical sense. The old divinities, in their various characters, could easily be raised to a higher standard. That this is what really happened, may be gathered from some of the names. If *Esus*, for instance, means 'the Good One', we cannot help being reminded of 'the Aged One' or 'the Victorious One'. *Teutates* is proved by the name itself to be an ancient tribal divinity; his primitive function can hardly have been anything but that of a protector, either divine or heroic. As to *Taranis* or *Taranos*, his name derives from a Celtic word (Welsh *aran*, Irish *torann*) denoting the thunder as an acoustic phenomenon.<sup>33</sup> In fact, he might be an ancient god in the typically Celtic sense of a strengthener of the oath. It is in the oath that the natural phenomena appear among the Celtic nations as superior

powers interfering in human affairs. In this capacity Taranis would naturally be a common Celtic mythological figure, and this suggestion is confirmed by the proper name *Glifieu Eil Taran* for one of the companions of the Children of Llyr in Welsh mythological story.<sup>34</sup> It means 'Son of Thunder' and recalls the Irish name of a divinity 'Son of the Sun' (*Mac Gréine*), of whom we know that he was so called because the sun was his god or oath-strengthenener.

In studying Gaulish religion the information supplied by the Roman authors, especially Caesar, must not be neglected. Yet it should be used critically as it contains a fair amount of *interpretatio romana*, or rather, *interpretatio pro Romanis*.<sup>35</sup> However, deities named by Caesar and attested by inscriptions cannot be fictitious; only the suitability of the Latin equations and the description of the god's function are open to doubt. Besides, there is always the possibility of survivals in Gaulish religion of notions or observances pertaining to the pre-Celtic inhabitants of the country, about whom we know next to nothing.

Of the great Gaulish gods, as enumerated by Caesar, Mars makes a very Roman impression. To him the spoils of battle are offered—Caesar has seen this with his own eyes—whereas in insular Celtic religion there is no trace of sacrifice. The archaeological evidence is not conclusive, and of literary there is none. That sacrifice could be introduced from foreign usage appears from the scene of Bran, son of Derg (*Acc. na Sen.*, ll. 920 sqq.), who begins by refusing to pay the tenth part of his game to the Church, but complies when Cáilte insists. Still, although the Gaulish Mars doubtless has adopted non-Celtic traits, there is some evidence that at the same time he represents an originally Celtic divinity. According to Caesar (*B. G.* 7. 2) the Gauls swear by their raised standards of battle, and this is their most solemn oath. This practice discloses the Gaulish Mars as an oath-strengthening god, whose primitive nature unfortunately escapes us. Of a similar character was, doubtless, Jupiter; he is naturally identified with the Gaulish Taranis, whose

function we have traced already. When Caesar declares that he rules the sky, this is well in harmony with our interpretation, since in Irish the sun and the moon are frequently invoked for the confirmation of the oath.<sup>36</sup> As a result of Caesar's diplomatic relations with the Gaulish tribes, the oath-strengthening gods would naturally rank foremost in his opinion. Apart from Mars and Jupiter, Caesar names three more principal gods of Gaul; Mercury, the inventor of arts, Apollo, the healer of diseases, and Minerva, the teacher of crafts. The resemblance of these gods to the Irish Tuatha Dé Danann and the Welsh Children of Llyr springs to the eyes. Their individualities have crystallized from the collectivity of a similar group. Mercury evidently developed among trading people. The commercial men formed a social class with which the Romans were familiar, and this accounts for the prominent position assigned by Caesar to Mercury.

Caesar's five chief gods of Gaul represent two types of Celtic deities. This conclusion is based upon the actual evidence on both sides. Mars and Jupiter are originally oath-strengtheners, of the type that in Ireland is classed as 'gods', and Mercury, Apollo, and Minerva are benevolent and protecting divinities of the land. We cannot make out whether their individualities had already developed to a stage where the designation as 'gods' would be justified in our eyes. This depends upon the degree of romanizing on one side, and of Caesar's *interpretatio romana* on the other. Of Jupiter we know at least the Gaulish name. Was there, then, no hero-worship in Gaul, such as is so strikingly prominent in Ireland and Britain?

A most interesting figure is Heracles, although Caesar does not mention him. Lucian equates him with the Gaulish Ogmios, the god of eloquence, but without sufficient foundation. Diodorus Siculus, on the other hand, characterizes the Gaulish Heracles in a manner that recalls very strikingly the insular Celtic protecting-heroes, Finn and Arthur. He collects supporters, takes his place at the head of his troops,

protects the land by abolishing lawlessness and subduing barbarous tribes; and as a centre for his protective activity he founds the city of Alesia. Obviously Alesia is to this Gaulish hero what the hill of Almu was to Finn and Caerleon to Arthur. The inference is that the character of the protecting exemplary hero belongs not only to the insular Celts but to the common Celtic stock. We do not know his Gaulish name. The Gaulish Heracles affords a precious confirmation of our argument concerning Finn and Arthur. The identification with the Greek Heracles is, of course, based upon the similarity of their exploits and upon the legend that in the course of his adventures the famous Hellenic hero also visited the shores of Gaul.<sup>37</sup>

We conclude with a remark on Apollo, the Healer. The interdependence of music and healing power is a commonplace in the Irish mythical stories. Fairy music is in itself a cure for all diseases. In North-British inscriptions Apollo has the surname of Maponos 'The Youth'. The combination of youth, healing-power, music, and heavenly bliss is typically Celtic. As a counterpart of the Gaulish Apollo Maponos let us remember the numerous youths of plenty among the Irish Tuatha Dé Danann.<sup>38</sup> In Gaul the belief in the magical energy of youth even had a social effect. There was a curious law (Caesar, *B. G.* 6. 18) that children, not yet capable of bearing arms, must not be seen publicly in the company of their fathers. This means that they form a separate group with, of course, its own religious symbol. Maponos seems to be their exemplary divinity, Maponos, or Mabon, who according to Welsh tradition was taken away, three days old, from between his mother and the wall. In Ireland there are also consecrated unions of the young, such as the noble youths of Ulster (in the Cú Chulainn cycle), or the yeomanry of the Tuatha Dé Danann, whose leader was Lug. The method of interpreting and expanding the sparse evidence on Gaulish religious thought from the Irish and Welsh material yields precious results, although our authorities are naturally silent regarding its magical basis.

The difficulty was to trace a central idea amidst the intricacies of insular Celtic tradition. Now that we have hit upon this, a wonderful light falls upon the Gaulish fragments too. Gaul had its mythical and heroic lore, much like the insular Celts; in Gaul the young formed a separate social class. They were the Gaulish apprentices. Their instruction was committed to the druids. These taught them many thousands of verses, says Caesar. Is it too bold to suggest that what Caesar calls a body of verse was in reality a collection of exemplary traditions, either in verse or prose, intended to prepare the young for their task of protecting the land from demoniac and human enemies? The highest grade was acquired not in Gaul, but in Britain. The best-gifted pupils used to cross the Channel and to remain away for many years. In Britain the druidical doctrine had been found originally (*disciplina reperta*). Commentators have asked why Caesar did not use the far more natural word 'invented' (*inventa*) instead of 'found' (*reperta*). The answer is that according to druidic belief their wisdom was not really an invention but an element of eternity, found existing at the moment when the first Celtic colonists landed on the British coast.<sup>39</sup> Here we recognize once more a fundamental idea that unites all the Celtic peoples and their store of paradigmatic tradition. It is the notion of the Land of Learning. The Tuatha Dé Danann received their potent knowledge from Greece; Cian, Lug's father, brought his home from Lochlann (or Norway); Cú Chulainn was sent to the Alps in the eastern world. To the Irish mind Greece, Norway, and the Alps were but names of fairy-land. The druids of Gaul, who had statues made for their divinities, transformed this mythical conception into a palpable reality. To them this fair island, rising from the sea, was the Land of Learning. Such it has remained for many of us up to the present day.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Amra Choluim Chille*, see *Lebor na Huidre*, ed. by R. I. Best and O. Bergin (Dublin, 1929), l. 1182: *admuniu[r] mórige meic Ethne ainm*. Ninine's Prayer, see *Thes. Pal.* ii. 322: *admuinemmar nóeb Patraicc . . . Dia lem la itge Patraicc*. Spell in the Stowe Missal, see *Thes. Pal.* ii. 250: *admuiniur epscop nIbar lccas . . . rontcca do súil sén Déa et C[ríst]*. 'An Old-Irish Prayer for Long Life', ed. by K. Meyer (*A Miscellany presented to J. M. Mackay*, 1914, p. 228): *admuiniur m'argetnia nad ba nad beba . . . domhtí aurchur n-aimsire ó Rí inna n-uile*.

<sup>2</sup> The story is found in two episodes of the Colloquy of the Ancients, see *Acallamh na Senorach*, ed. by Whitley Stokes (Stokes and Windisch, *Irische Texte*, iv. 1, Leipzig, 1900), ll. 5452-631 and 6083-353; S. H. O'Grady, *Silva Gadelica*, ii. 233 sqq. The three Sons of the King of Iruath visit the Fiann, together with their hound, and promise to protect Ireland on three conditions, namely, that they shall not be approached during the night, that it shall not be attempted to provide them with any food, that the poorest game-country shall be allotted to them. Besides, they must never be questioned as to their true nature. This is accepted by the Fiann. In turn, the hound vomits gold and silver for them and the water in their drinking-horns is turned into mead (Stokes, ll. 5452-514). During the night the divine protectors hide themselves behind a wall of fire. One day, the two Ulster princes leap over it and see the hound, now no larger than a lap-dog, pouring the choicest drinks from its mouth into the drinking-horns. As soon as it perceives the princes it sends forth a fiery wind, which makes ashes of their bodies (ll. 5555-631). The Fiann are vexed at the mysteriousness of their protectors and conspire to kill them. From this they are dissuaded by Finn, who bids the three leave him, but allows them to remain when they have disclosed their names (ll. 6083-141). Then the Sons of Uar appear and desire a tribute from the Fiann. When this is refused, they threaten to extinguish the Fiann (ll. 6146-76). Finn tells his heroes to prepare each his own rampart. This he also does himself. The three Sons of the King of Iruath ward off the Sons of Uar from the Fiann and heal their wounds. Finn himself receives the protection of the hound, on condition that it shall never be lodged in one house with fire, arms, or another dog; from this moment it turns round Finn thrice an hour, licks him, and diffuses a smell like mead and apples (ll. 6177-210). In the meantime, King Cormac of Tara, who has heard of the sufferings of Finn and his men, invites the Sons of the King of Iruath to his court and at his request one of them pronounces a charm, with the effect that the demons fly towards the sea and kill each other with their swords

(ll. 6211-69). Then follows the story of the two Munster princes and Cáilte's spell (ll. 6270-353); the arrival amongst the Fiann of the princes is told in ll. 5895-909.

<sup>3</sup> Edited by K. Meyer, *Zeitschr. f. celt. Phil.* iii. 433 sq.

<sup>4</sup> The text contains two passages referring to the magical virtues of the Sons of the King of Iruath. Cf. *Acc. na Sen.*, ll. 5461-70: 'I shall discharge the watching of the Fianna of Ireland and Scotland', said one of them. 'Every stress of battle and combat that shall befall the Fiann, I shall ward it off for them all, let them all but keep still', said the other. . . . 'Every serious difficulty that shall arise before my lord, I shall remove it, and everything that shall be demanded from him shall be obtained from me,' said the third; 'and as for the hound, as long as there shall be any deer in Ireland, it shall discharge the hunting for the Fianna of Ireland every second night, and I shall do the like myself on the remaining nights.' *Acc. na Sen.*, ll. 6093-103; and Finn said: 'They possess three arts, and it would not be right for the men of the world to kill them because of these arts'. 'Should the men of the world be in sickness or disease,' said Cáilte, 'then one of the three would apply herbs to their ailments, so that they would be smooth and scarless. And whatever is asked of the second man is gotten from him. And as to the third man, let the wants of the world be told to him, and they will be satisfied without failing. And there was still more, as well as all these: he had a pipe, and the men of the world would sleep at its sound, however great their pains. And as to the hound,' said Cáilte, 'even though none of us should kill a deer or (other) animal, thanks to it we should never be in want.'

<sup>5</sup> The only case where the Irish texts (with the exception of Aided Clainne Tuirill Picrenn, on which see note 6) use the word *dee*, 'gods', is in the name of the Tuatha Dé Danann and in the oath. 'Gods' are invoked in order that the oath may be sanctioned by them. Cf., for instance, *Lebor na Huidre*, l. 5504: *artungsa deu* (in the *Táin Bó Cualgne*), Book of Leinster, 55 a 12: *dothung mo deo da n-adraim* (*Táin Bó Cualgne*, ed. Windisch, l. 143), Book of Leinster, 108 b 18: *atbiursa mo dee* (in the text *Gessa agus ilberta bltis for Coin Culainn*, edited by Wh. Stokes, *Rev. celt.* xiv. 396 sqq.). Here a lasting relation is implied. The oath would be worthless if the god were at liberty to forsake the swearer. But the word *dee* is only used in the plural and there is no trace of personality in these 'gods'. When Keating says of Mac Cuill, Mac Cécht, and Mac Gréine that they received their names because *Coll* (Hazel), *Cécht* (Plough), and *Grian* (Sun) were 'gods of adoration (*dee adartha*) to them', he probably gives his own interpretation.

<sup>6</sup> The early version has been published by Thurneysen, *Ź. c. P.* xii. 239 sqq.; it consists of a poem and a prose commentary. Of the



later recension there are editions by O'Curry (*Atlantis* iv. 1863), O'Duffy (Dublin, 1902), and Craig (Dublin, 1902). On the different forms of the name (*Tuirill*, *Tuireann*, *Piccrenn*, *Biccrenn*, *Picreo*, *Bicreo*) see Thurneysen, loc. cit.

<sup>7</sup> Or a *mytheme*, if it may be allowed to coin a new term which would prove very useful for the study of comparative mythology.

<sup>8</sup> It might be suggested that the revelation of a god for the human world was what made the early Irish embrace Christianity with so much fervour. To the Norsemen (and probably other Germanic tribes) the motive was different. They longed to be relieved from the wandering of the soul after death.

<sup>9</sup> See Duanaire Finn, *The Book of the Lays of Fionn*, edited by Eoin MacNeill, i (London, 1908), p. xxiv sqq. (Irish Texts Soc., vol. vii). Professor MacNeill has shown that the connexion with the high-kings of Tara, and with Conn of the Hundred Battles in particular, was not there at the earliest stage. At all events, the connexion with the subject races of Leinster, and of other provinces, is older. Hence the Fenian Cycle would reflect the epic tradition of the subject races of Ireland, which constituted two-thirds of the population. It would have been orally transmitted during the time when the Ulster epic was receiving its final shape at the hands of men of letters, who were the representatives of a new aristocracy. It is true that in 'The Youthful Exploits of Finn', Cumall, the chieftain's father, is slain by the race of Morna and the men of Conn, whereas his death is avenged on a chief of the subject race of the Luagni. The contradiction is removed by the assumption that originally the Luagni were responsible for Cumall's death also, in which case the story would preserve the memory of a conflict of subject races. But this does not prove that the historical connexion is the primitive element in Fenian tradition. The same objection applies to the argument that only the subject races were required to furnish a militia of the type of the Fiann. On the Viking traditions see R. Th. Christiansen, *The Vikings and the Viking Wars in Irish and Gaelic Tradition*, Oslo, 1931.

<sup>10</sup> See *Red Book Mabinogion* (Oxford, 1887), pp. 113, 134; J. Loth, *Les Mabinogion*, i (Paris, 1913), pp. 284, 331; *Acc. na Sen.*, ll. 5917 sqq.

<sup>11</sup> The tombstone of *Anir filius Arthuri militis* is described in the *Mirabilia Britanniae*, the appendix to Nennius's *Historia Britonum*, see A. G. van Hamel, *Lebor Bretnach* (Dublin, 1932), p. 80. On the dwarf of Tara's grave see *Acc. na Sen.*, ll. 7978-93, and R. A. S. Macalister, *Tara, A Pagan Sanctuary of Ancient Ireland*, p. 58.

<sup>12</sup> See, for instance, *Duanaire Finn*, ii, ed. by G. Murphy (London, 1933), pp. 184 sqq.

<sup>13</sup> Cafal's footprint and tombstone occur in the *Mirabilia Britanniae*.

Of Bran it is said that its sides were white, its tail purple, its legs blue, its paws green, and its nails pale red (*Duan. Finn*, ii. 198).

<sup>14</sup> For Rhita Gawr see Loth, *Les Mab.* i. 314 and ii. 303; Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Hist. Reg. Brit.*, ed. by A. Griscom (London, 1929), p. 473; T. Gwynn Jones, *Welsh Folklore and Folk-custom* (London, 1929), pp. 77-9. The ballad of Finn slaying the monster of Loch Derg: *Duan. Finn*, ii. 234 sqq.

<sup>15</sup> See *Red Book Mab.*, p. 134; *Acc. na Sen.*, ll. 7264 sqq.

<sup>16</sup> See *Lebor Bretnach*, p. 71; *Acc. na Sen.*, ll. 4774 sqq. On Arthur and Huail, son of Caw, see Baring-Gould and Fisher, *The Lives of the British Saints*, iii. 106.

<sup>17</sup> See *Red Book Mab.*, pp. 134, 128, 131 sqq.; E. K. Chambers, *Arthur of Britain* (London, 1927), pl 263; *Text of the Book of Taliessin*, ed. by J. Gwen. Evans (Llanbedrog, 1910), pp. 54 sqq.

<sup>18</sup> For Finn's battle against the Dogheads see *Duan. Finn*, ii. 20 sqq. The Dogheads number three thousand and land in the north. They kill many of the Fiann, but are at length beaten by Finn. The ballad describes 'each dog's tooth as large as a man's fist, and its circuit equal to a warrior's grasp'.

<sup>19</sup> The act of drinking from a particular well may have the deeper meaning of a communication with the earth and a magical enlightenment as to its secrets. This notion is found among both Britons and Irish. On their respective expeditions to Fairy Land both Owain, Arthur's knight, and Diarmaid, Finn's warrior, approach the spirits of the land by drinking from a magic well, with a magical drinking-horn (cf. J. Rhŷs, *Hibbert Lectures*, 1888, pp. 187 sqq.). Knowledge is a spiritualized form of communication.

<sup>20</sup> For the war of the Tuatha Dé Danann with the Fomore see the *Second Battle of Moytura*, ed. by Wh. Stokes (*Rev. celt.*, xii. 52 sqq.). The famous leech of the Tuatha Dé Danann was Dian Cécht, but he was outshone by his son, whom he slew out of envy (O'Curry in *Atlantis*, iv. 158). One of the most attractive members of their race is Cas Corach. He follows Cáilte and the Fiann, until he receives the blessing of St. Patrick, and entertains his companions with his exquisite fairy-music (*Acc. na Sen.*, pass.). Aillén mac Midna, on the other hand, is of the wicked type; every year, on All-Hallows, he brings sleep over the Fiann with his music and sets the hall of Tara on fire (*Acc. na Sen.*, ll. 1662 sqq.). Finn himself, however, is saved by his magical spear (l. 1719). On the Feast of Goibniu see *Acc. na Sen.*, ll. 6402 sq. The Tuatha Dé Danann have other magical objects besides that enable them to conserve their blessed state, e.g. the so-called Four Jewels of the T.D.D., on which see V. Hull, *Z.c.P.* xviii. 73 sqq.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. *Pedeir Keinc y Mabinogi*, ed. by I. Williams (Cardiff, 1930),

pp. 47 (Bran's head), 63 (Manawydan's mice), 34 (the healing cauldron), 46 (the birds of Fhiannon); J. Loth, *Les Mab.* i, pp. 129, 148, 149, 168.

<sup>22</sup> Créde provides milk and healing during the battle (*Acc. na Sen.*, ll. 829 sqq.). On the tooth of wisdom see R. D. Scott, *The Thumb of Knowledge* (New York, 1930), and on the *geasa* J. R. Reinhard, *The Survival of 'Geis' in Mediaeval Romance* (Halle, 1933).

<sup>23</sup> Arthur disinters Bran's head because he desires all the glory for himself; see Loth, *Les Mab.* ii. 242. The story of Arthur's game of chess occurs in Rhonabwy's Dream (*Red Book Mab.*, pp. 153 sqq.; Loth, *Les Mab.*, i. 364 sqq.); it affords an interesting instance of magic in the second power. Arthur's crushing of the chessmen causes the defeat of Owein's ravens and this, again, the discomfiture of the Saxons.

<sup>24</sup> On the magical obligations of kings see J. Baudiš, *Eriu*, viii. 101 sqq., and J. Reinhard, *op. cit.*, 107 sqq. On the Thirteen Jewels of Britain: R. S. Loomis, *Rom. Forsch.* xlv. 68 sqq. On foot-holders and bed-men at insular Celtic courts: J. Rhŷs, *Hibbert Lectures*, p. 305; O'Curry, *Manners and Customs*, iii. 143 sqq.; I. Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 67; Geoffrey of Monmouth, *Hist. Reg. Brit.* xii. 2 (ed. Griscorn, pp. 513 sqq.).

<sup>25</sup> See K. Meyer, *Fianaigeacht*, Dublin, 1910 (Todd Lect. Series, no. 16).

<sup>26</sup> See *Tripartite Life of St. Patrick*, ed. by Wh. Stokes, i (London, 1887), p. 48; *Eriu*, xi. 224.

<sup>27</sup> The technical term for this form of protection is *gress*, on which see *Eriu*, xi. 94 sqq.

<sup>28</sup> See *Duan. Finn*, ii. 60 sqq. The philosophy of this ballad (as of many other specimens of Fenian literature) recalls Plato's ideal world.

<sup>29</sup> *Dux bellorum* would make a very satisfactory equivalent for *rígféinid*, the Irish title of Finn.

<sup>30</sup> On Caer Sidi see R. S. Loomis, *Speculum*, viii. 428 sq. On Mabon's prison at Gloucester: W. J. Gruffydd, *Y Cymmrodor*, xlii. 129 sqq. Finn himself is imprisoned by a divine magician (*Duan. Finn*, ii. 60 sq.) and by a witch (*Béaloides*, ii. 26 sqq.).

<sup>31</sup> A substantial account of the different doctrines relating to the name Mabinogion is found in the introduction to Prof. I. Williams's edition of *Pedeir Keinc y Mabinogi* (Cardiff, 1930), pp. xlii sqq. On p. xlix Prof. Williams remarks that in our texts the 'Mabinogi' traditions of different parts of Wales have coalesced, and that originally Gwynedd and Dyfed, Powys and Gwent had their own tales; cf. also I. Williams, *The Poetry of Llywarch Hen* (Sir John Rhŷs Mem. Lect. for 1932), p. 16. Similarly in Ireland each of the provinces originally had its own *fiannaigeacht*, but in texts like the Colloquy of the Ancients and the

Dindsenchas it was joined together. Here is another illustration of the inner affinity of the Irish and the Welsh material.

<sup>32</sup> Irish *lug* still denotes a lynx. In Welsh, *llŷu* no longer occurs in this sense. But the evolution of *lleu* to *llew* 'a lion' (in the proper name *Llew Llawgyffes*), shows that the episode of how Llew Llawgyffes got his name (in the Mabinogi of Math ab Mathonwy), conveyed to the keepers of the tradition the notion that the name was that of a wild animal.

<sup>33</sup> The word is not related to Latin *tonare* or English *thunder*.

<sup>34</sup> See I. Williams, *Pedeir Keinc*, p. 44. The Red Book has the form *Gliuieri*.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Caesar's *De Bello Gallico*, vi. 13 sqq.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. also the reply of certain Celtic envoys to Alexander the Great: 'We fear nothing save that perchance the sky may fall upon our heads' (R. A. S. Macalister, *Tara, A Pagan Sanctuary of Ancient Ireland*, p. 14).

<sup>37</sup> The passages in Lucian (*Heracles*, 1-5) and Diodorus Siculus (*Bibl.* iv. 19) are rendered by Dottin, *Manuel pour servir à l'étude de l'antiquité celtique*, 2nd ed., pp. 301 sq., 311 sqq. If Lucian's *Ogmios* has anything at all to do with the Gaulish counterpart of Heracles, then the figure having numerous chains linked to its tongue, and thus leading all those to whose ears the chains are attached, might symbolize the exemplary hero as the embodier of traditions to be imitated by those employed in the protection of the land. What Diodorus describes is evidently the career of the Gaulish equivalent of Heracles.

<sup>38</sup> One of the names of the Land of the Bliss in Irish is *Tír-na-nÓg*, 'the Land of the Young', not 'the Land of Youth' as it is usually rendered. A typical instance of an Irish Apollo Maponos is Cas Corach, on whom see note 20.

<sup>39</sup> Likewise the roads of Ireland had been 'discovered' when Conn of the Hundred Battles was born (R. A. S. Macalister, *op. cit.*, p. 78 sq.). The roads, as a vital organ of the land, are divine, eternal, and uncreated.